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Tuesday, September 10, 2013

Rep. George Miller (D-CA) Opening Statement for Committee Hearing on the Institute of Education Sciences

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the ranking member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, for the committee hearing on strengthen the Institute of Education Sciences.

Chairman Kline, thank you for holding this important hearing. As we begin a new school year, our nation's schools stand on the threshold of major transitions.

Schools are implementing new college and career ready standards. And they are piloting new assessments aligned to those standards. Teachers and principals are being evaluated in new ways to measure and improve their effectiveness. Districts and states are implementing new accountability systems that focus intense efforts on turning around their most struggling schools.

These are seismic changes. To ensure that children benefit, we need to support robust research to identify what is working and what can be improved.

When Congress passed the Education Sciences Reform Act in 2002, we did so to complement the bipartisan effort of No Child Left Behind. We wanted to strengthen the quality and rigor of education research. And we wanted to take advantage of the new, rich data that would emerge from NCLB requirements.

Eleven years later, thanks to NCLB and ESRA, we have a wealth of data that can be used to measure what is working for students, make corrections where things are not working, and create ways to ensure continuous improvement in the future. That is the task I hope this Committee will take up as we review ESRA.

In 2002, the quality of education research was lacking. Much of it was driven by politics rather than science. As a response, we created the Institute of Education Sciences. Its mission was to conduct scientifically rigorous research, outside the influence of politics or the trend of the moment.

Since then, IES has crafted high standards for the research it funds. It trains and supports researchers across the country. Its studies are peer reviewed. A decade later education research is more rigorous and sound.

However, research is not effective if it only answers abstract questions or is published in a professional journal. Research must be relevant as well as rigorous. And it must be widely shared with those who work with students, in order to make a difference.

I am pleased that IES has taken some steps in this direction. In 2012 IES overhauled the nation's 10 regional research labs. It did so by connecting them with research alliances of policymakers and practitioners. The alliances work with the labs to identify pressing education problems in schools and then the labs develop and test strategies for solving them.

Take New England, for example. The Northeastern regional lab created a research alliance on early childhood. That alliance gathered the region's early childhood stakeholders to create a research agenda that focuses on standards, assessments, and practices to improve early education. The resulting research will now be more useful to practitioners and have a ready-made network for disseminating it.

As we examine ESRA and the role of IES, I hope we will keep this need for both rigor and relevance in mind. I hope we also keep in mind that we in Congress must be good federal partners in this effort. That means we must provide stable and sufficient resources to IES to do its job.

The IES budget for FY12 fell just short of \$600 million. That is less than 1 percent of our overall federal education budget. Other fields invest far more in research and development. We should take a serious look at this. More money is not always the answer, but sufficient money is.

Also, we must not forget that sequestration cuts this year are limiting research right now. And another round of cuts beginning in January could have a crippling impact and destabilize ongoing and vital research. I hope my colleagues will join me in seeking ways to invest in education research in a smart way that avoids waste; but also in a sound way that avoids harmful austerity.

I thank all the witnesses for appearing today. I am pleased that there is such interest and leadership in addressing the quality of education research in America.

I look forward to your testimony. I yield back.

<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov>